

IV. Remarks

After entry of the amendment, claims 8-12 are pending.

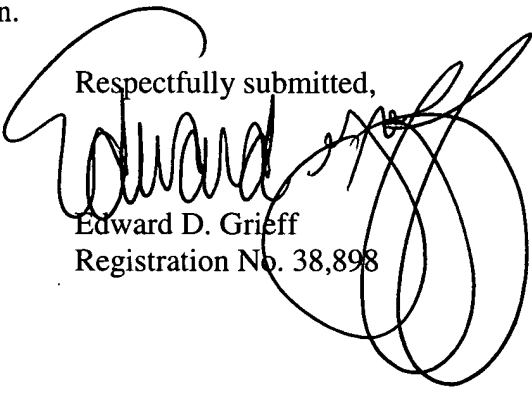
Applicants elect Group II drawn to claims 9 and 10, without traverse.

Claims 9-12 are supported by the application at, for example, page 4, line 28 to page 5, line 1; page 7, lines 9-17; page 56, line 6 to page 57, line 21.

Pending claim 9 was filed on December 21, 2001, and U.S. Patent No. 6,306,841 issued on October 23, 2001. According, claim 9 was on file within two months of the issuance of U.S. Patent No. 6,306,891. Moreover, the present application claims priority to PCT/US97/19870 which was filed on October 31, 1997. U.S. Patent No. 6,306,891 was filed on March 30, 2000, and was a CIP of an application filed on October 28, 1997. Accordingly, the present application claims priority to a date that is earlier than the filing date of U.S. Patent No. 6,306,891, and which is only 3 days later than the priority date -- and it has not been established whether the claims in U.S. Patent No. 6,306,891 are even entitled to this priority date.

Pending claim 10 was filed on December 21, 2001, and U.S. Patent No. 6,031,002 issued on February 29, 2000. (The Preliminary Amendment filed December 21, 2001, incorrectly identified this patent as U.S. Patent No. 6,013,002.) According, claim 10 was on file within ten months of the issuance of U.S. Patent No. 6,031,002. Moreover, the present application claims priority to PCT/US97/19870 which was filed on October 31, 1997. U.S. Patent No. 6,031,002 claims priority to an application filed on May 1, 1998. Accordingly, U.S. Patent No. 6,031,002 is not prior art to the present application.

Respectfully submitted,


Edward D. Grieff
Registration No. 38,898

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HALE AND DORR LLP
1455 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004
Phone: 202-942-8453